

## Seeds of hope in the midst of violence

by Miriam Mondragon



Sarah Newnham / Tearfund

Many of the areas with high levels of violence are also poor, like this community in the Honduran capital, Tegucigalpa.

With 20 murders committed every day, the United Nations ranks Honduras as the most violent country in the world. Hondurans themselves consider violence and insecurity to be the country's main problems. Organised crime has influence at every level of the state. Drug traffickers have public officials at their service and this stops justice from being done.

At a local level, gangs are in control in the urban neighbourhoods and districts, as well as in the rural villages and hamlets. They are active right through from the street dealing of hard and soft drugs (marijuana, cocaine, amphetamines) to extortion, kidnapping and murders committed against their own neighbours, often under the protection of members of the police

and armed forces. No-one in Honduras needs convincing of the urgent need to prevent violence and change the current state of affairs.

### Building bridges

The question that arises in such a situation is how we, as Christians and churches, take up the prophetic challenge to 'maintain

justice and do what is right' (Isaiah 56:1) in the midst of such serious violence, and when fear is real and paralysing. Yet despite this apparently desperate situation, seeds of hope have been sown and are now beginning to bear fruit. One such seed is the Christian Alliance for Dialogue and Conciliation (*Alianza Cristiana por el Diálogo y la Conciliación*), which emerged as an initiative of the Church and organisations following the 2009 *coup d'état* in Honduras, which left the country deeply divided and contributed to the current climate of violence. The Alliance initially began by creating spaces for dialogue and reconciliation between groups in conflict under the banner of 'Building Bridges to Peace'. It has since changed its focus to inspiring and mobilising the Church about violence prevention because members of churches are themselves living in violent areas and can play a key role in building peace.

### Practical prevention work

It has become clear that the best antidote to violence – both now and in the future – is prevention, and who better to work with

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Readers are invited to contribute views, articles, letters and photos.

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than children and young people at risk? Together with the Bible Union of Honduras (*Unión Bíblica de Honduras*), the Alliance has promoted the 'Stop the violence – a message from God' programme aimed at young people in the country's schools. The programme originated in Argentina, where its aim was to prevent violence among football fans. In Honduras, with the permission of the Ministry of Education, hundreds of church volunteers have been trained in preventing violence in schools and are running a programme of 15 weekly lessons, helping young people to make the right decisions. The programme has inspired 10 per cent to 15 per cent of the young people to commit to becoming 'agents of change', tasked with preventing violence and bullying at school.

## Supporting victims

Another member of the Alliance, the Association for a More Just Society (*Asociación para una Sociedad más Justa – ASJ*), was established by committed Christians in 1998 and has been fighting to make the justice system accessible to the most vulnerable sectors of society. One of its most successful initiatives is the *Gedeón* Programme, which, from its offices within churches in poor communities, offers psychological care and legal advice to victims of violence or people with other

## Group discussion questions

- What did you learn from this article?
- What issues of violence are there in your community?
- How could you be part of preventing violence?
- What kind of resources would you need for this work?
- Who could you work alongside to bring transformation?

legal or psychological problems. Given that most victims of violent crime (extortion, robbery, rape, murder at the hands of local gangs) have never been able to make an official complaint, the ASJ decided to go one step further and establish the Peace and Justice Programme (*Programa Paz y Justicia*) aimed at meeting the needs of, and providing support to, victims. *Paz y Justicia* has a team of lawyers, researchers and psychologists working closely with victims and witnesses to ensure that justice is done. *Paz y Justicia* forms a bridge between the forces of law and order and the community. The programme:

- conducts investigations
- provides support for victims during the legal process



Miriam Mondragon

Young people with a hunger to see justice in Honduras gathered at a camp to promote peace.

- offers psychological care to restore their emotional well-being.

*Paz y Justicia's* work in the communities has resulted in a 60 per cent drop in the crime rate and, to date, more than 100 convictions of individuals and criminal groups. This successful model of cooperation between the community, state and civil society is now being extended to new communities.

## United for peace

On a national level, the Alliance for Peace and Justice (*Alianza por la Paz y la Justicia – APJ*), a movement initiated by Christians, is campaigning for better public safety and demanding changes in the justice system that will ensure that Honduras is a country that respects the rule of law and delivers justice for victims of violence. This alliance has had a substantial impact and is unique to Honduras in that very different sectors have embraced its vision: it includes NGOs, Evangelical and Catholic churches, labour unions, businesses, universities and so on.

The Evangelical Fraternity of Honduras (*Confraternidad Evangélica de Honduras*), which provides national representation for most of the Evangelical churches, is also an Alliance member. Honduras needs the body of Christ to raise a prophetic voice against injustice and inequality, and for lawyers, psychologists, journalists and other Christian professionals to use their knowledge in the service of the poor and vulnerable.

*Miriam Mondragon is Coordinator of the Christian Alliance for Dialogue and Conciliation (Alianza Cristiana por el Diálogo y la Conciliación).*

## More information

- **Asociación para una Sociedad más Justa:**  
(Spanish) [www.asjhonduras.com](http://www.asjhonduras.com)  
(English) [www.ajshonduras.org](http://www.ajshonduras.org)
- **Alianza por la Paz y la Justicia:**  
[www.alianzapazyjusticia.com](http://www.alianzapazyjusticia.com)

# BIBLE STUDY Christ triumphs over conflict

by David Scott

**God loves diversity; he has created us all to be unique and this is something to celebrate. In Genesis 10 we learn about how different ethnic identities form part of God's purposes. In Chapter 11:1-9 we discover what happens when people seek cultural uniformity in their attempt to dominate other people groups.**

Throughout history ethnic identity has often brought conflict and tension. This is not the way it should be. The Bible tells us that human beings were created to live in a harmonious relationship with God and one another. The root of conflict is a broken relationship with God rather than any ethnic or cultural differences.

### Read James 4:1-2; 1 John 2:9-11 and 4:20-21

- *What do these passages say about where relational conflict begins?*
- *What helps us to prevent conflict?*

Jesus came to reconcile us to God through the cross, bringing us into restored relationships with one another (Ephesians 2:16; Colossians 1:20). In Christ, ethnic identities and cultures are united without being destroyed; all people are seen as equal, with bonds far deeper than those which hold other groups together (Romans 10:12-13; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:11). In light of this, the people of God are called to focus on the shared identity they have in Christ, which is more important than their ethnic and cultural ties.

### Read Ephesians 2:11-22

- *What does this passage say about reconciliation between Jew and Gentile?*
- *What does 'one new humanity' mean in this passage (verse 15)?*
- *What does it mean for us to become a new unified people in Christ?*
- *How does this passage challenge you in your relationship with Christians from different cultures or ethnic groups?*

By being placed together within God's new community we are brought into relationships with those who are different from us. These differences are intended to be a source of blessing, but they can often

The Bible tells us to make every effort to restore relationships where there is conflict

be a source of tension. The Bible tells us to make every effort to restore relationships where there is conflict (Romans 15:5-6; 2 Corinthians 13:11; Ephesians 4:1-6). This means we need to keep walking in repentance and forgiveness, and know that there are no cultural, ethnic or social barriers that Christ's love cannot overcome (Matthew 18:21-35; Luke 10:25-37; Colossians 3:12-15).

### Read Luke 6:27-42; Romans 12:9-21; Philippians 2:1-8

- *What principles do we find in these passages for resolving conflict and making peace?*
- *What does it mean to love our enemies?*
- *What does the passage in Philippians say about unity?*

The Bible also tells us that Christians are to play a role in society as peacemakers (Matthew 5:9). Firstly, as 'ambassadors of Christ' we are called to reconcile people to God through the 'gospel of peace', which will result in them being reconciled with God's covenant people (2 Corinthians 5:18-20; Ephesians 6:15). The Church is also called to be prophetic, modelling to society what reconciled relationships look like. It should demonstrate the way of Christ in word, presence and deed, reflecting the coming kingdom where every tribe, language, people and nation will together worship God (John 17:20-23; Revelation 5:9).

*David Scott works at Tearfund in the Eurasia, Latin America and Caribbean team. He is currently also doing a PhD in Theology.*



# Peaceful elections for all

Elections to choose representatives and leaders are one way in which people can have their voices heard. A democratic system helps enable different views to be debated within a parliament, rather than opponents using force to bring about the outcome they want.

Unfortunately, in the last few years, there has been serious violence both before and after elections. Often riots and clashes happened when the election process was considered to have been unfair by those who had voted for the losing parties. There were often accusations of electoral fraud and rumours which caused reactions in people gathered to hear the results.

Several Tearfund partners have been involved in work seeking to prevent violence around election time. Most



People cast their votes at a polling station in Tanzania.

of their work has been focused on pre-election promotion of peace, working with church leaders, political activists and voters to create a positive and safe atmosphere. Work in Kenya by Reverend Dominic Misolo saw results in the largely peaceful elections

of 2013. At the time of writing, elections are yet to take place in Zimbabwe but Blessing Makwara shares how churches are working together to prepare for their country's upcoming ballot.

## Case study – Zimbabwe

**The 2008 elections in Zimbabwe were followed by disturbances which were both unexpected and bloody.**

The Church was criticised for not doing enough to protect vulnerable people. The violence triggered widespread fear, trauma, withdrawal and collective depression. It also left resentment, frustration and thirst for retribution among parts of the population. Unless there is justice for those caught in violence, anger and a desire for revenge could create the conditions for future explosion. The present transitional period under the Government of National Unity (GNU) in Zimbabwe presents opportunities to the Church to play a key role in speaking out for peace, justice, healing and reconciliation as well as facilitating the rehabilitation of the country.

The Ecumenical Peace Observation Initiative in Zimbabwe (EPOIZ) focuses on the centrality of education, cultural change, and spirituality in all genuine attempts to make peace a reality in daily life. EPOIZ is a project of the Zimbabwe Heads of Christian Denominations (ZHOCD), a platform that brings together four umbrella church bodies:

the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ), the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops' Conference (ZCBC), the Zimbabwe Council of Churches (ZCC) and the Union for the Development of the Apostolic Church in Zimbabwe, Africa (UDACIZA). The churches will also be strengthened by the support of longstanding international partners within the Ecumenical Zimbabwe Network (EZN) and regional and global ecumenical networks.

The main goal of the initiative is to promote and protect an enduring culture of peace in Zimbabwe and facilitate national healing and reconciliation. Specifically, as members of EPOIZ, churches will commit to speaking out together and working together on monitoring and responding to violence and human rights abuses.

Through EPOIZ, the Church will employ the following strategies and actions aimed at peace-making, peace-building and peace-keeping:

- Promoting dialogue and strategic engagements with key stakeholders
- Awareness raising and education rallies and gatherings

- Monitoring the actions, processes and statements from the political parties, media and government relating to long-term peace
- Pastoral and solidarity visits to areas affected by violence and engagement with the police and local leadership there
- Promoting peaceful participation of people in electoral processes
- Engaging the key regional and international community to promote peace in Zimbabwe

Our prayer is that by doing these and the many other activities that we have committed to, we will see a reduction of violence before, during and after elections, building the basis of a new culture of peace and justice. The Church is the only institution in Zimbabwe that brings together people from all walks of life, acts as the conscience of the nation and is still regarded highly by society as both a peacemaker and a moral authority.

*By Blessing Makwara, Senior Program Officer, at the Evangelical Fellowship of Zimbabwe (EFZ)*

## Case study – Kenya

**Kenya as a nation is a multi-ethnic society with over 41 tribes. The political situation is complex, with many tribal interests, favouritism and widespread corruption causing tension. Around election time this has often turned into violence.**

After the 2007/8 general elections there were a number of allegations of serious vote rigging and corruption. Many people disputed the result. About 1,300 people were killed in the inter-ethnic violence which followed and over 500,000 people were displaced. Rapes, looting and arson attacks were also witnessed. It was a dark time for Kenya.

Our organisation, Ekklesia Foundation for Gender Education (EFOGE) is a registered non-governmental organisation in Kenya, working for gender justice and equality in Africa. Inspired by others doing similar work elsewhere, I decided we should try to make a difference ourselves. What most inspired me was the thought of one day having a peaceful and democratic election in Kenya, guaranteeing longer-term peace.

As I work regularly with local community and church leaders, I know that they are well placed to influence and educate communities about peaceful elections and coexistence. Encouraged by others, I shared my thoughts with the Rt. Rev. Johannes Angela, Bishop of the Anglican Diocese of Bondo. In partnership, we managed to conduct a successful one-week training course on civic education and leadership. We hosted over 160 church and community leaders, as well as a number of political contenders, to discuss peaceful elections. We covered specific topics such as leadership and the Kenyan general elections,

democracy and the rule of law, devolution of power and the new constitution etc.

This work had its challenges. I needed courage to talk about peaceful elections, as our lives were sometimes at risk. People did not always understand what we were trying to do. Some thought we wanted to convince people not to vote for a particular candidate, but really we were talking about accepting the results and moving forward as one nation and people. We explained to people that we all needed to trust the legal framework of the new constitution. Others thought we would prevent freedom of expression if the elections were disputed. It was a challenge to raise funds for the training but the Bishop of Bondo and the World Council of Churches provided for us.

Generally we witnessed a very peaceful election in our region, with leaders urging young people not to take sides and not to provoke people's emotions by spreading rumours of cheating and vote rigging. Even though the result given was not pleasing to the majority in my area and a petition was submitted to the Supreme Court contesting the results, there was patience as people trusted the legal process. Cases of cheating and rigging were reported but people remained peaceful and let the court give its verdict. The final ruling was not popular but the majority of people accepted the court verdict.

I advise others to get involved in this kind of work because I believe that church leaders have a vital role to play in bringing peace and preaching democracy in a country like mine.

*By Rev Dominic Misolo, founder of EFOGE and part of the Tearfund Inspired Individuals programme  
[www.inspiredindividuals.org](http://www.inspiredindividuals.org)*

## EDITORIAL



Alice Keen  
Editor

We all experience conflict in our lives. Whether it is within our families, with colleagues or neighbours, there are times when we disagree with others. Disputes can have many causes, including land, natural resources, water, political power or religion. Some have suggested that the 21st century will see more and more conflict as more people compete over scarce resources and share the same space.

In this issue we focus on situations where conflict has become violent because people are trying to resolve conflict by using force. This always has a destructive effect. Many *Footsteps* readers live in places which have seen conflict become violent, some for a short time, others for decades. We know that this is a topic which is often 'close to home'.

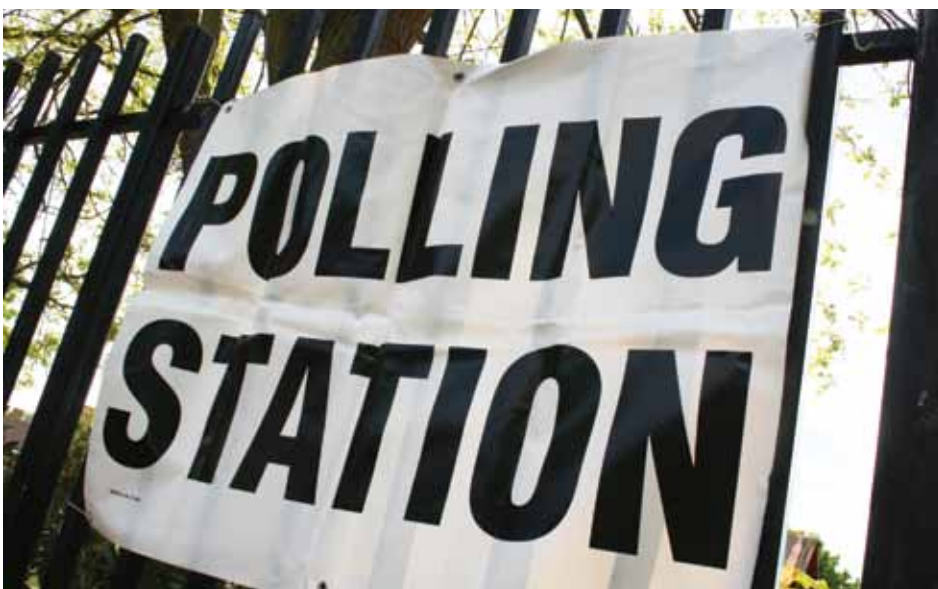
But Jesus calls us to be peacemakers in a world where there is conflict. This is no easy task. There are deep questions and challenges. In violent conflicts, what does it mean to seek peace?

Contributors from the DRC, Honduras, Northern Ireland and Kenya begin to answer that question in their articles. They share ways to seek peace and resolve conflicts before they become violent. There are also practical tools to help you to analyse conflicts (pages 7–9.) and to facilitate dialogue (pages 12–13).

The next issue will look at ways to gather local resources. If you have any topics you would like to see covered in future *Footsteps* or you would like to write a letter to share with other readers, please write to us at the usual address.

May **peace** be with you,

Alice



**TILZ website** [www.tearfund.org/tilz](http://www.tearfund.org/tilz) Tearfund's international publications can be downloaded **free of charge** from our website. Search for any topic to help in your work.



## Working with Conflict: skills and strategies for action

ISBN 1 85649 837 9

This source book is for people working in areas affected by conflict and violence. It will be useful for all those who are working in conflict-prone and unstable parts of the world in the fields of development, relief work, human rights, community relations, peace and reconciliation.



Easy to use, well laid out, and including helpful visual materials, it provides a range of practical tools – processes, ideas, visual aids and techniques – for tackling conflict. These tools have been developed over a number of years by Responding to Conflict (RTC), in collaboration with practitioners from around the world. It includes examples from Cambodia, Afghanistan, South Africa, Kenya, Northern Ireland and Colombia. The book explains the options available to individuals and organisations, equips them to plan appropriate responses and strengthens their capacity to engage in useful interventions.

Books can be bought by emailing RTC on [enquiries@respond.org](mailto:enquiries@respond.org) or by writing to:

### Interesting websites

#### Insight on Conflict

([www.insightonconflict.org](http://www.insightonconflict.org))

...provides information on local peace-building organisations in areas of conflict. It features case studies, blogs and resources. It is an initiative of Peace Direct ([www.peacedirect.org](http://www.peacedirect.org)), a UK-based charity that finds, funds and promotes local peace-building in conflict situations.

#### The Conflict Sensitivity Consortium

([www.conflictsensitivity.org](http://www.conflictsensitivity.org))

...exists to promote conflict sensitivity in the development and relief sectors. Their helpful 'How to guide to conflict sensitivity' is available to download from their website.

## Family Links Network

In times of armed conflict or natural disasters, family members can become separated. The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement (including the International Committee of the Red Cross and National Societies) works around the world to locate people and put them back in contact with their relatives. It is also able to exchange family messages when normal means of communication have broken down. The Movement's ability to

trace people depends on the information provided and local circumstances, including the security situation.

The Movement is a neutral and impartial humanitarian network. It welcomes people of all faiths and of none, and seeks to serve all according to need alone. To trace a missing relative or for more information, visit [www.familylinks.icrc.org](http://www.familylinks.icrc.org) or contact your National Society office.

### Responding to Conflict

1046 Bristol Road  
Birmingham  
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Cost: £15\* plus postage and packing

\*mention *Footsteps* to pay this reduced price

### ROOTS 4: Peace-building within our communities

ISBN 1 904364 12 8

This Tearfund guide is ideal for Christians who are working in conflict situations and seeking to bring peace. It explores conflict and reconciliation theory and gives a biblical basis for involvement in peace-building. It shares learning from Tearfund partners who work in the field of peace and reconciliation and includes many practical ideas for peace and reconciliation initiatives. This guide is available in English, French, Spanish and Portuguese.



*ROOTS 4* can be ordered by writing to:

The Tearfund Publications team  
Tearfund  
100 Church Road  
Teddington  
TW11 8QE  
UK

It can be downloaded free of charge from the TILZ website ([www.tearfund.org/tilz](http://www.tearfund.org/tilz)).

### Previous issues of *Footsteps*

- ***Footsteps 88* – Managing Disasters**  
This issue featured an article on 'Working with displaced people' which is relevant to conflict situations.
- ***Footsteps 68* – Forgiveness and Reconciliation**  
Focusing on how we respond to conflict and seek to build a lasting peace, this issue features articles such as 'Learning to resolve conflict' and case studies from Colombia, DRC, Northern Ireland and Cambodia.
- ***Footsteps 36* – Coping with Conflict**  
This issue from 1998 includes a feature on 'How people respond to conflict' and a Bible study on 'Loving our enemies'.

All issues of *Footsteps* can be read on, and downloaded from, the TILZ website. Hard copies can be requested by contacting the Editor and will be sent subject to availability.

### Thank you to all the libraries who have responded to our call!

We have received a large number of requests for back copies of *Footsteps* and are currently processing your letters and emails. Thank you for your patience in waiting for our response. If you have not heard from us by November, please write to us again (by post at the usual address or by email) as your correspondence may not have reached us.



# ABC of conflict analysis

When conflicts become violent, there are generally three ways for organisations working in the conflict zone to respond:

- **Working around the conflict**  
We stop working in areas that have passed a certain threshold of violence.
- **Working in the conflict**  
We continue to serve in violent areas in a 'conflict-sensitive' way, but we don't try to address the conflict directly.

- **Working on the conflict**  
We work on reconciliation, peace-building, and addressing the underlying causes of violence.

Working *in* conflict is almost as challenging as working *on* conflict – because both require us to start with a detailed **conflict analysis**. Whether we want to actively build peace or just to keep working in a violent environment without doing harm, we need to start by understanding the conflict.

Without a good conflict analysis, we cannot answer the questions that are the cornerstone of a conflict-sensitive

approach: '**How will our work affect the conflict?**' and '**How will the conflict affect our work?**' And if we get the answers to these questions wrong our projects can easily do harm, increasing people's vulnerability to conflict and putting ourselves and our staff at risk.

Two common conflict analysis tools are:

- the ABC triangle (see below)
- the Conflict map (see page 8).

For more, see the RTC book *Working with Conflict: skills and strategies for action* and the *Tearfund Good Practice Guide on Conflict Sensitivity*.

## ABC triangle

In a conflict, the violent **behaviour** we see has its roots in people's **attitudes** and the political-economic **context**. The ABC triangle is a simple framework for exploring the impact and causes of conflict. You should complete one triangle for each of the major groups involved in the conflict.

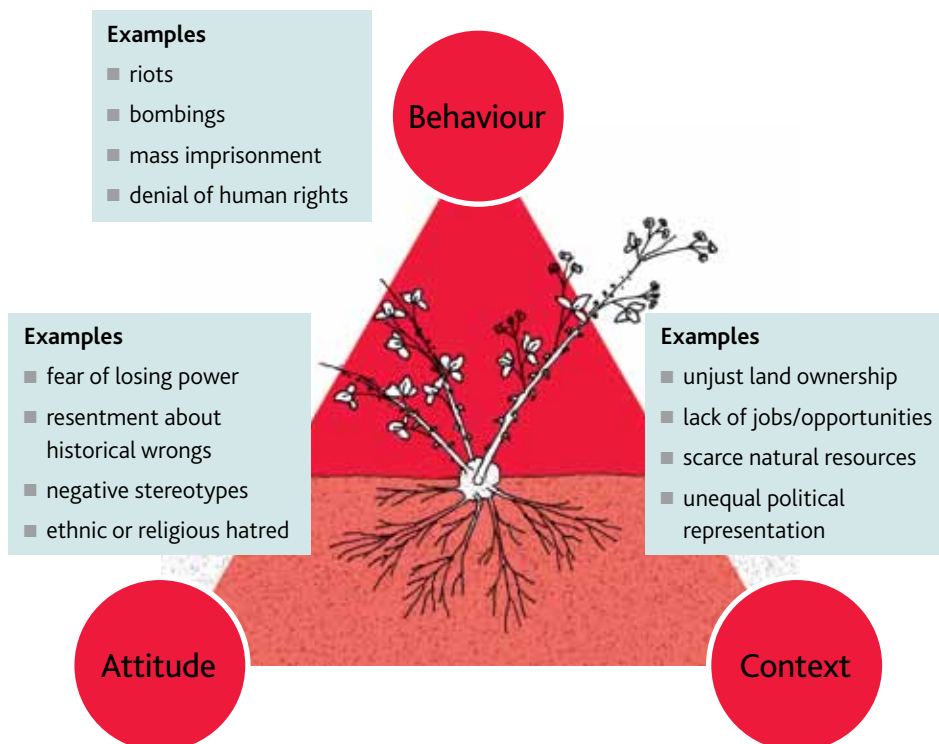
If you are working *in* conflict, you can use the triangle to answer questions like:

- How will our work be affected by the behaviours we have identified? Will it affect any of the contextual factors that drive the conflict?

- How will our staff and our work be perceived by each group, given the attitudes we have identified?

If you are working *on* conflict, you can also use the triangle to answer:

- How can our work restore relationships by addressing negative attitudes?
- How can our work improve the contextual factors that are driving the conflict?



### Root and branch

Sometimes violent conflict is shallow or **apparent** – the roots of the violence are not deep, perhaps based in a misunderstanding.

In other contexts, there may be little violent behaviour, but there are deep-rooted problems in people's attitudes and the context. This is a **latent** conflict, where it is essential to address the roots of conflict before they lead to actual violence.

The most difficult kind of conflict is **persistent** conflict, in which violence is both visible and deep-rooted.

# Conflict map

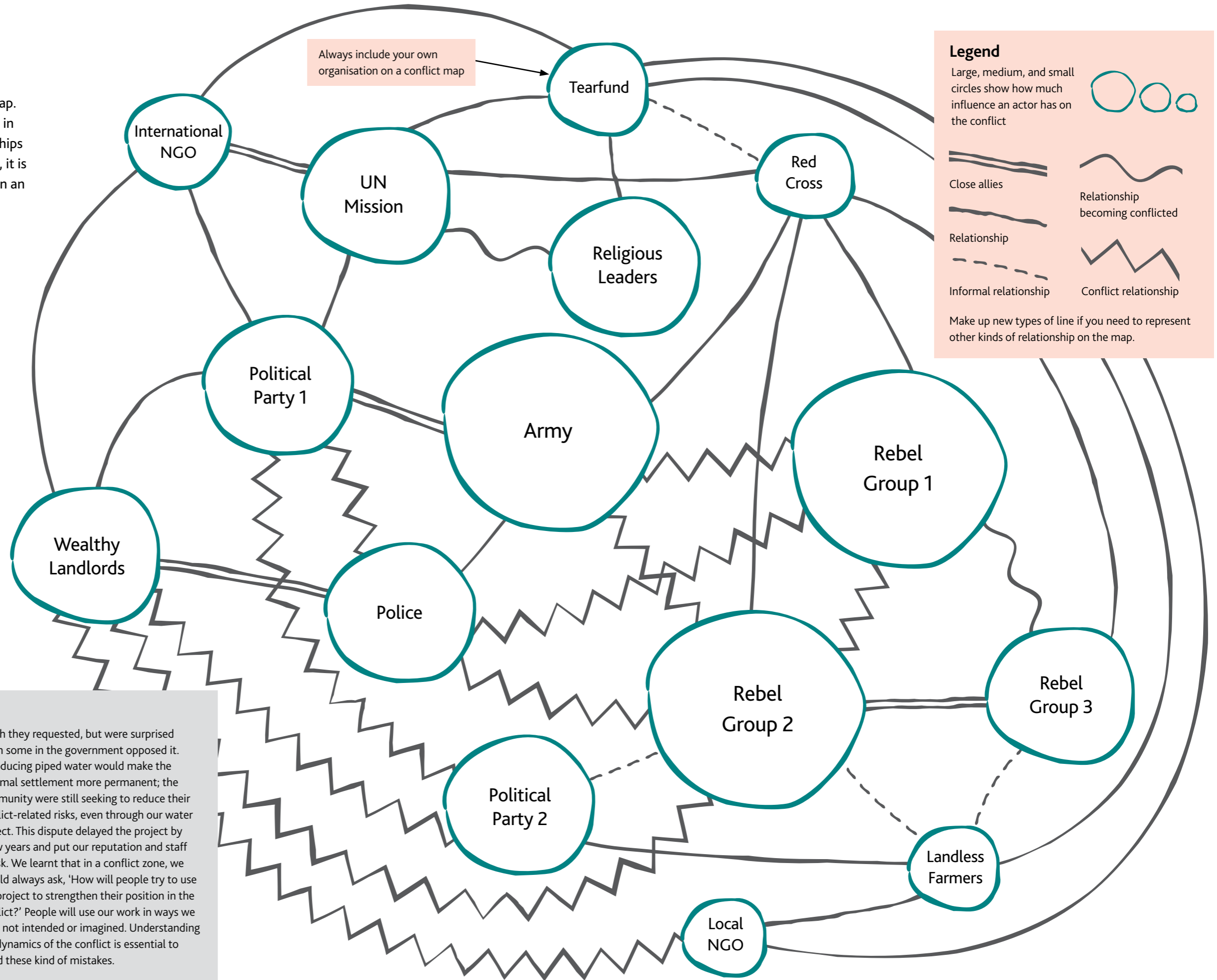
This is also called a relationship map or actor map. It uses circles to show the main groups involved in the conflict, and lines to represent the relationships between them. Like most conflict analysis tools, it is best drawn as a group activity, eg with all staff in an organisation or in a community group.

If you are working in conflict, you can use the map to answer questions like:

- Given our relationships with some groups, how are other groups likely to perceive us?
- Do we need to form or mend a relationship with anyone on this map?
- Who on this map benefits from our work? How will that affect the conflict and other groups' perceptions of us?

If you are working on conflict, you can also use the map to answer:

- Which relationships on this map could we restore, strengthen, or create in order to reduce conflict?
- Can we engage with all the groups who have the most influence in the conflict?
- Does our work address the root causes of broken relationships between any groups on this map?



## Case study – Afghanistan

### Why we need conflict analysis

Tearfund has worked in Kandahar, Afghanistan, for many years. We serve in an informal settlement built on government land, where displaced people from all over the country live without official permission.

One of our projects aimed to help communities reduce their risk of disasters. We began by asking them to identify their greatest risk. Instead of answering 'flood' or 'drought', this time the answer was 'the police'. The insurgents living in their neighbourhood were fighting with the police, putting the residents in danger.

Our project was not meant to work on conflict issues, so we asked them to choose a natural hazard instead! We worked on the water project

which they requested, but were surprised when some in the government opposed it. Introducing piped water would make the informal settlement more permanent; the community were still seeking to reduce their conflict-related risks, even through our water project. This dispute delayed the project by a few years and put our reputation and staff at risk. We learnt that in a conflict zone, we should always ask, 'How will people try to use our project to strengthen their position in the conflict?' People will use our work in ways we have not intended or imagined. Understanding the dynamics of the conflict is essential to avoid these kind of mistakes.



# Peacemakers in action Two men working in different

## North-east India

### Insight by Bann Makan

*In the early 1990s there were violent clashes between two ethnic groups in north-east India. The Nagas and the Thadou-speaking Kukis were the main groups involved. There had been tension between the groups for generations and competition over ownership and use of land. But during this fresh eruption of conflict, the violence reached levels which had not been seen before and spread throughout the state.*

*Bann Makan takes up the story...*

A beautiful 150 acres of rolling hills was home to us, 30 km away from Imphal. We had established a Pastoral Training Centre and a primary school for the Naga, Kuki and Meitei children from surrounding villages. The tension between the Kukis and Nagas had just begun, breaking into a civil war. Caught amid the clash we were forced out of the land. The Centre was attacked one Sunday morning. When we reached it, we found that 14 out of the 15 houses had been fully gutted by fire. But God had prepared us to face the reality of the massive loss by giving us a sign as we approached the village on that bright sunny day. Splashed across the horizon was

the most beautiful rainbow, not just one but three layers of rainbow even though there was no rain to be seen! We were reminded of God's promise to Noah in Genesis 9:12-13. Another assurance of his promise we found in two books, half burnt in the ruins, both open at the passage in Philippians 4:19, 'And my God will meet all your needs...'

We are Nagas ministering among multi-ethnic communities as care-givers to drug addicts, people living with HIV, the poor and marginalised, planting churches and training leaders. Even though we are not from the main ethnic group, for us Imphal is home. When tensions rose, many Naga people left; we stayed on. But eventually,



friends advised us to go to a safer place, and we left for three months. When we returned, there were still political tensions. Identity is a sensitive issue here.

### Ministering in a violent place

We faced challenges and threats – constant riots, civil protests (bandhs), shoot-outs and bomb blasts. Searching for safe hideouts when bullets were flying in front of our house, and getting threatening calls, were both part of our lives as we continued the ministry. God's call on our lives grew stronger, and amid growing tension we still managed to open a clinic where many lives were transformed in the heart of the most volatile area. The small church we planted then has branched into eight churches today. We dared and God, who ordained us 'for such a time as this', shielded us and worked through us. He blessed our weak human efforts, causing us to bear fruit that lasts (John 15:16).

I was a Peace Committee member, meeting with different ethnic groups, politicians, police, and government representatives to bring peace and reconciliation. Returning home late one night, I was chased by another vehicle despite the paramilitary highway patrol. Even our five-year-old son sensed the danger we faced and asked his mother if I would be killed by the opposing group. This hurt me so much that I took new steps to ensure my safety and security.

### The Peace Committee

**The Peace Committee was set up in collaboration with the All Manipur Christian Organization (AMCO) in response to the violence of the 1990s.**

All denominations were represented on it. At the beginning, we spent a lot of time in prayer and discussion. At times it was more like a centre for addressing grievances because many of the Committee members themselves had been affected by the violence. The work of AMCO continues during times of crisis but the Peace Committee itself no longer meets. Reflecting now, 20 years after the major clashes, it would have been

wise to continue the work of the Committee for longer. Bitterness still remains and efforts to bring lasting peace are still needed.

We had three objectives:

- Controlling the clashes; stopping the burning of villages and the killing of innocent people. We tried to meet as many leaders as possible. It was a time of mistrust and suspicion. The members travelled to sensitive areas with permits from the government and talked to people there. Sometimes, we used loudspeakers from a distance to speak to the villages.

- Caring for the displaced and managing relief work. We were slow to do this kind of work. We could not reach the affected areas immediately as it was not safe. Relief supplies did not arrive at the most needed time because it took time to collect and distribute them, and assistance from outside donors arrived late.
- Bringing the two factions together. We did this through remaining neutral and communicating with all the parties involved in the conflict. Building trusting relationships takes time.

# regions of the world tell us their stories of practical peace-making

## Compassion does not take sides

In conflict situations either you compromise and favour one side or you stay neutral and build relationships. We chose to remain neutral, asking for God's blessings to work through us.

Conflict robs people of their perspective. Communities in conflict situations are usually there because they have lost their perspective, allowing interest groups to dominate their core. It is said that 'we can choose our friends but we cannot choose our neighbours'. We have a situation in Manipur state where neighbouring ethnic groups are not on good terms. As Christians we must stand above the situation and build bridges for communal harmony.

## Building bridges

God puts some in hostile and dangerous situations with the assurance of his continuous presence and protection. At times we had no message to give

the people to comfort and bless them. The most difficult times for me were conducting funerals of conflict victims, including that of a young police officer who was killed by the opposing group.

In our position as care-givers, we often encountered conflicting interests. I once had the privilege of helping a young man from the community who destroyed our training centre. Caught in the fight between our two communities, he could not take his sister who was ill to Imphal for treatment. So he came to me in my church office seeking help. He would describe his sister's symptoms and I would ask my friends, who were doctors, to prescribe the right treatment. We would also give him clothing, rice and some money. Six months later, she recovered and as a token of thanks he brought me an egg laid by their own chicken.

Not long after the communal riots I was invited to speak at the pastors' conference

of the community who destroyed our training centre. It was a serious choice to decide to go and I wondered if it would be a good move. They vouched their lives for my security. I went. It was a good decision: I was accepted and it was a sign of forgiveness. Forgiveness is a choice. The greatest joy for us is that we forgive those who wound us, and we are amazingly blessed.

*Rev. Dr. Bann Makan is an ordained Baptist minister and is the Executive Director of El Shaddai Resource Centre (ESRC). He is a graduate of Fuller Theological Seminary in California. He has worked at a national and international level on leadership development and ministries of compassion. He has pastored Centre Church Imphal for seven years, has planted several churches and is presently involved in Bible translation, peace efforts and mobilising churches for Integral Mission. Bann and his wife serve together and are blessed with three children.*

*Adapted from an article published by the Christian Medical Journal of India (Volume 27, Number 4) with kind permission.*

# Northern Ireland

## Interview with Mark Houston

### Can you tell us a bit about yourself?

I am 51 years old and have been Director of East Belfast Mission since 2007. I am married and have two daughters aged 23 and 19. Prior to being Director here, I pastored City Church in the south side of Belfast for 12 years.

### Can you give us a bit of background to the tensions which flared up in January 2013?

The dispute started around the flying of a certain flag outside a government building. In my opinion the tension was just an overflow of a few years of anger, frustration and a community's sense of being left behind.



### How was the community affected by the situation?

The community experienced trauma, economic catastrophe, loss of confidence in policing and politicians and a sense of hopelessness and despair. It was devastating in many ways.

### How were you involved in bringing a peaceful end to the crisis? Who else was involved in this process?

I was involved on a daily basis alongside other community leaders, church leaders, police and politicians. Together we were able to launch a petition, signed by members of the community. To our delight this resulted in much of the street violence coming to an end.

### What role do you think Christians have in resolving conflict/building peace?

Jesus said 'blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God'. I believe he was indicating that peace-making and peace-building are the 'family business' of God. This takes diligence, training, commitment and great patience, but if we as followers of Jesus do not listen to this call, then we fail to reflect God's heart.

# Practical skills: facilitating dialogue

In the process of handling conflicts it is important to look for ways of expanding the possibilities for dialogue amongst the parties involved. Dialogue is often abandoned too early as emotions rise, and people begin to use forceful strategies. But eventually the parties will return to dialogue as they try to work out an agreement to end the conflict.

Facilitation of dialogue is a skill that can be especially useful during the stage of confrontation, before the situation has polarised to the point of crisis. Of course, the application of this skill will need to be adapted to the particular culture and circumstances in which you are working. Facilitating dialogue enables people to share their own views and listen to

differing views about a political or social concern, thus gradually moving towards a deeper understanding of their situation. Agreement is not a primary aim of dialogue, but understanding is.

Any effort to encourage conflicting groups to enter into dialogue needs to ensure that it does not increase tensions. The following guidelines are aimed at preventing this.

## Be clear about your own role and objectives



As facilitator, be clear about what is or is not part of your role. Your role is to assist the process of communication without expressing your own views about the issue being discussed. Your objectives are to provide a setting and an atmosphere in which differing views can be exchanged and listened to honestly but without hostility.

As facilitator you are responsible for the process, but not for the content of the discussion. If you are working as a team of facilitators, then it is important that co-facilitators agree in advance about roles and objectives. It is also important that you explain your roles and objectives clearly to the participants and check that they have understood and agree with them.

## Assist participants to agree on ground rules for this dialogue



Help them to set guidelines for themselves which they own and follow during the dialogue. Consider in advance, and make clear, the mechanism for dealing with difficulties.

- How will people signal that they wish to speak, and who will give them the floor? Who will decide whether ground rules have been respected?
- Think in advance about what you, as facilitator, will do in given cases. People may test the limits. How will you respond?
- Are you clear who has set the rules, so that you are able to say that the whole group has agreed them, or that a planning committee decided on them?
- Are you willing to discuss the possibility of changing the rules? If so, how? By everyone agreeing, or by majority vote, or another way?

## Help the participants to identify their own objectives



In advance of the session, you should try to meet with key people from the groups involved to help them set their objectives. This will make it more likely that groups will 'own' and support the structure and aims of the process. In any case, there should be a brief statement of agreed objectives at the beginning, to remind everyone why they have come.

**FOR EXAMPLE:** they may want to present their side's perceptions or a party position, win votes for an upcoming election, envision people about the future or give a personal perspective. Is this objective consistent with the aims of other parties to the discussion?

## Some possible scenarios

There are various situations in which one might want to encourage and facilitate political and/or social dialogue, including:

- Within an existing group whose members have not wanted to share their views on a difficult political or social topic with each other, or have discussed these only in a negative or adversarial way.
- Between different groups, when they meet together, sometimes explicitly to share views on a political or social issue, sometimes for another task or purpose, wherever a difficult issue is likely to arise.
- In a private meeting between opposing political figures, facilitated by another more neutral person (who may have brought them together).





## Encourage participants to listen to each other



Political talking often seems to include very little listening – it is what someone called ‘the dialogue of the deaf’. While one person speaks, the others prepare what they want to say, and they listen only to contradict each other’s arguments.

For change to happen, people must really hear each other, and must feel that they have been heard. As facilitator, you need to have ideas for ways to encourage listening. Some ways in which you might help people to listen to each other include:

- Paraphrasing, ie checking what people have said, and demonstrating to them that they have been heard.

**EXAMPLE:** ‘Are you saying that...?’

- Asking questions that help people to share their personal views rather than a party statement, if it is appropriate to be vulnerable in the given context.

**EXAMPLE:** ‘Have you always held that view?’ or ‘what experience led you to that?’

- Encouraging responses to feelings and experiences as well as issues.

**EXAMPLE:** ‘Do you see how that would feel to the other person?’

Despite the pressure caused by all the things a facilitator should do, try to focus your eyes and your attention on each speaker, and try to imagine how each listener is coping. If there is any possibility that listeners might be having problems, encourage the speaker to slow down, speak more loudly, or define terms. If possible, have a co-facilitator who can look after time, process and note-taking, freeing you to concentrate on the content of the discussions and the participants.

## Have a strategy for coping with strong emotions



The first step in dealing with strong emotions is to notice them. As facilitator, be attentive to signals that indicate strong feelings. Then:

- Try to provide a safe way for people to express emotions, by asking open-ended questions that allow space to talk about feelings without forcing:

**EXAMPLE:** ‘Would you like to tell us how you react to that?’ Or offer a format or structure that would allow people to express their feelings in a structured way:

**EXAMPLE:** ‘When you do/say \_\_\_\_\_, I feel \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.’

- If possible, get people to share the experience that has prompted the feeling, rather than having multiple expressions of the same feeling.
- Try to provide ways for aggressive emotions to be transformed into more vulnerable ones; for example, anger may mask hurt or sadness, while fear may be an expression of helplessness or powerlessness. But do not force people to take more risks than they are ready for. You can only make the opportunity – they must decide whether or not to take it.

- Though it is best for emotions to be expressed by those who feel them, the facilitator can sometimes verbalise emotions that he/she can see in the group.

**EXAMPLE:** she/he may say ‘that makes me uncomfortable, because it may hurt some people here’.

- Be prepared for parallel feelings to arise and give them room to be expressed – but try to deal with one at a time, promising to return and give attention to other feelings later.
- Where possible, let participants respond to each other’s emotions in a natural way, without intervening to protect or direct them unless it seems necessary.

Talking about emotions and experiences can free us of our positions, and enable us to concentrate on needs. Getting beyond ‘party positions’ to honesty is more likely to lead to cooperation and discussion that is focused on the problem, rather than on our strategies for winning. Open-ended questions may allow participants to suggest future actions or new possibilities in an attempt to meet everyone’s needs.

# From DRC to the UK

## Conflict resolution training and peace education

by Ben Mussanzi wa Mussangu

The Centre Resolution Conflicts (CRC) is a community-led peace-building and conflict resolution training centre, founded in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 1993. It now has two branches, one working in risky security conditions of Ituri and North Kivu in the east of the DRC and the other in the relatively peaceful environment of Bradford in the UK. The main focus of CRC's work is conflict resolution training and peace education, but in the DRC it also works to rescue child soldiers.

We run workshops covering different aspects of conflict resolution and prevention, including topics such as 'how people respond to conflict', 'how to reduce prejudice' etc. However, topics vary depending on the context and whether there is ongoing conflict or a time of peace. In the DRC we look at practical topics such as hospitality for returnees, democratic and transparent elections, and the reintegration of ex-child soldiers. The main impact of CRC training sessions in the DRC is resolving inter-community conflicts.

We use what we call 'facilitation-model mediation'. We invite both parties in conflict to a training session. During the

course of the training, many realise that they have done wrong and seek forgiveness from others. Sometimes, when we run workshops for church leaders or students in Christian colleges, participants request a special session to focus on forgiveness and reconciliation with their neighbours.

### Challenging work

Our work has challenges for both participants and trainers. The first challenge is making sure that participants put into practice what they have learnt at the workshops. Those who come to be trained are often Internally Displaced People (IDPs) who have suffered trauma, lost all their

belongings and are currently living without enough food. This makes it difficult for them to focus on learning, because they are worried about the future. The second challenge is to provide good conditions for workshops, including refreshments and some money to cover participants' transport and accommodation. However, participants and trainers have benefited from the training both in DRC and in the UK. Participants gain conflict resolution skills. Trainers and radio presenters also benefit because they have to learn in order to pass on that knowledge. This helps them to grow.

### Local peace-makers

After the workshop, participants choose members for a Local Peace Committee (LPC). The LPC model is at the core of CRC's vision. The committee has seven people (inspired by the story in Acts 6), including a leader, a secretary and counsellors. They do not charge for their advice. When CRC trainers leave a village, the LPC will take over the conflict resolution work and will help to manage any new conflict in the area. This enables CRC to move to other villages and to only give support when it is most needed.

CRC also supports participants by providing legal advice for those who need it. In many cases one of the parties in a conflict wants to go to court, but very often they are disappointed by the justice system. The LPCs can then help by providing mediation between the two parties.

The idea of setting up CRC in the UK came to mind following the terrorist bombings in London in July 2005 when we noticed that vulnerable young people were involved in this sad event. We committed ourselves to contributing to peace by focusing on educating young people, as well as helping asylum seekers and migrants to integrate into society.

### Peace on the airwaves

One of our most successful projects is our 'Peace Music' radio programme, developed at CRC in Bradford. The idea is to use music as a tool to communicate our peace message to our city but also, through the internet, we are reaching out to the world. We do not write our own



Participants gather together after a training session in Beni Territory, DRC.

Ben Mussanzi wa Mussangu

## Case study

In one of the national parks in Lubero Territory, which is set aside for gorillas, neighbouring communities and the park's managers had a tense relationship. MONUSCO (United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo) recognised that this was a complex situation. They called for CRC's expertise. After several facilitation-model mediation sessions, CRC succeeded in resolving the conflict. It was amazing to see the two parties who had been in conflict sitting together around a table signing a peace agreement, publicly giving up thoughts of revenge and instead resolving the conflict with their former opponents.

music, because there is so much good music already! Instead we are like chefs in restaurants. Chefs don't need to be farmers. They just go to the market and buy food to make a nice meal which their clients can enjoy. But alongside the music, we deliver an educational message. People can listen on the internet. We have received positive feedback from corners of the globe where we have never been and perhaps will never go!

In the DRC, we have two radio programmes, called 'At the school of wisdom' and 'Peace and development'. The second programme features interviews with special guests, who are invited to talk about development issues such as security, healthy eating etc.

Conflict may look different in the DRC or in the UK but the principles of resolving conflict are the same. It takes determination, forgiveness, listening and understanding but we are blessed when we take part in making peace in the world in which we live.

*Ben Mussanzi wa Mussangu, the founder of CRC, was nearly killed in the DRC by child soldiers from his own ethnic group. Released miraculously, he co-founded CRC in 1993 with his wife Kongosi. Today, 20 years on, CRC is working in ongoing instability in eastern DRC and in Bradford in the UK. We thank CRC members in Beni and Bradford for their valuable contribution. For more details about CRC, please go to [www.cr-conflict.org](http://www.cr-conflict.org) and [www.centresresolutionconflicts.org](http://www.centresresolutionconflicts.org)*

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Email: [publications@tearfund.org](mailto:publications@tearfund.org)

## Traditional ways of predicting the weather

Early warning of disasters or extreme weather can allow communities to take early action, saving lives and protecting livelihoods. Climate science and meteorology [the science of weather] can give helpful information. But many communities already have existing or traditional ways of predicting the weather or foretelling extreme events by observing the behaviour of animals, birds, insects, wind and clouds. For example due to the local knowledge of the sea, a community in Indonesia saved the lives of over 80,000 people during the 2004 tsunami by encouraging them to move to higher land.

I would like to know what traditional methods or systems you use in your communities. Do you have ways to predict extreme weather or disasters? I would like to collect this knowledge and share it with other readers.

Thank you!

Claire Hancock  
Food Security Officer, Tearfund  
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## Footsteps in Swahili

Thank you for your encouragement towards my aim to translate *Footsteps* magazine and other Tearfund publications into Swahili – our national language, so that many people can understand its contents. I have read carefully and understood the guidelines for translation and I promise to follow them when I start this work.

Israel Saghwara  
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**EDITOR'S NOTE:** *Do you currently translate Footsteps into Swahili? Have you translated any of our back issues or other Tearfund publications? If so, please do contact Israel Saghwara at the above address. If you have translated any of our publications into other languages, we always love to know! It means we can share your work with others and, if we have an electronic version, we can share it on the TILZ website.*

## Advice on setting up a conflict resolution training programme

**Conflict is part of our earthly life. But we want to bring unity, peace, harmony and cohesion to our communities.**

To those who are inspired to start from zero, as we did, and pursue the dream of bringing about change in their own communities, we offer the following advice:

- Find out what the local community needs in terms of conflict resolution.
- Select the conflict resolution approach or style which suits you as trainer and will benefit your community (eg direct intercommunity mediation, mediation-facilitation model, alternatives to violence etc). There is more than one way to run things successfully.
- Recruit and select trainers.
- Start from the simplest definitions in your training.
- Focus on the essentials rather than giving participants too much information in one session.
- Remember what is called the 'principle of three pillars':
  1. Many people may book a place but the right people will turn up.
  2. Start when you feel that participants are ready to start.
  3. Stop when you feel that they are tired.
- If possible, provide a very simple handout.
- Remember people around you may not understand your vision or may persecute you.



# Sexual violence in conflict zones

Violence takes many forms in conflict situations. One area which is often difficult to talk about openly is sexual violence. Yet across the world, thousands of people, mostly women and children but also men and boys, suffer attacks which leave deep scars, both physically and psychologically.

Sexual violence brings with it physical injury, humiliation and psychological trauma. It tears families and communities apart. It can result in unwanted pregnancy, long-term disability, sexually transmitted diseases and even death.

Rape, and other forms of sexual violence, are about an abuse of power and control over people who are more vulnerable. Society may blame survivors of sexual violence, but they are not responsible. Yet the majority of survivors never receive justice and face challenges in accessing medical, psychological and economic support. Further violence can be prevented by protecting the most vulnerable people in society. Communities can also support survivors as they try and access justice and as they receive medical support. Incidents of sexual violence can be reported at police

stations (especially if there is a 'gender desk') or United Nations agencies with Gender Based Violence focal points.

Gender inequality is both a cause and a consequence of violence against women. When we treat someone else as different from us, as the 'other', and of less value than we are, it can fuel conflict and violence. But the Bible teaches us that both men and women are made in the image of God, entrusted by him to be jointly responsible to rule over his creation (Genesis 1: 27-28). We need to go back to God's original plan and restore relationships between men and women to how God originally intended them to be.

## Church attitudes and action

Changing attitudes to sexual violence takes a long time but the church has a key role to play in this process. Bible studies, sermons and teaching materials can change people's



Chris Boyd / Tearfund

attitudes to both victims and perpetrators. Churches which care for, support and listen to victims are needed. In partnership with others, they can help to provide medical, psychological or financial aid to survivors.

The church can also speak out at all levels, local and national, to bring the issue into the light. If church leaders are courageous in talking about sexual violence, they will influence those within and outside of the Christian community.

Churches have not always been places which have been welcoming to survivors of sexual violence and have sometimes reinforced the shame which victims often feel. Where this is the case, repentance and forgiveness will be needed.

## Initiatives and resources

- **We Will Speak Out** is a global Christian coalition committed to seeing the end of sexual violence across communities around the world ([www.wewillspeakout.org](http://www.wewillspeakout.org) or We Will Speak Out, 100 Church Road, Teddington, Middlesex, TW11 8QE, UK).
- **Restored** is an international Christian alliance seeking to transform relationships and end violence against women ([www.restoredrelationships.org](http://www.restoredrelationships.org)).

*With thanks to Aneeta Williams, Amanda Marshall and Sarah Reilly.*

## Case study

In eastern Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), the Baptist Community in the Centre of Africa (CBCA) has taken the issue of sexual violence very seriously, particularly that targeting children. The church has mobilised its members and the teachers, pupils and parents of its church schools to become key players in the fight against sexual violence.

CBCA organised a five-day training workshop for 40 of its education staff. Materials developed by South Africa's Tamar campaign on violence were used to enable discussion of a shocking story of rape in the Bible (2 Samuel 13). This enabled participants to reflect on the silencing of women who have been raped, cultural issues around rape within communities and the difficulty of bringing justice.

In response, participants decided that the greatest need was to challenge the current understanding of church members concerning sexual violence. They wrote a declaration calling for those in authority in church and government to speak out about sexual violence and to develop policies to address the issue in schools. Within weeks of the workshop, words were turned into action. CBCA's Bishop announced the formation of a high-level group to address issues of sexual violence targeting church schools. In many areas, teachers benefited from workshops and training concerning life-skills and education about sexual violence.

*Adapted from Silent No More, a Tearfund report (2011), available to download from: [www.tearfund.org/tilz/silentnomore](http://www.tearfund.org/tilz/silentnomore)*